

DEPARTMENT OF STATE



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INTERVIEW OF THE HONORABLE HENRY A. KISSINGER SECRETARY OF STATE WITH NEWSWEEK

QUESTION: Looking back over the conduct of American foreign policy in 1974, what have been your greatest satisfactions and greatest disappointments?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Strangely enough, the greatest satisfaction was that we managed the Presidential transition without a disaster. This was a rather heartbreaking period. I was extremely worried that while the central authority was in severe jeopardy, the transition might create basic weaknesses in the structure of our foreign policy. I considered our ability to continue an effective foreign policy the most satisfying thing. Of course, individual events were important, too: I got great satisfaction from the Syrian disengagement.

QUESTION: In that transition period, was there a hiatus in which you could not function very well?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I would say from July to October was a period in which we could not act with decisiveness. Every negotiation was getting more and more difficult because it involved the question of whether we could, in fact, carry out what we were negotiating. Secondly, we were not in a position to press matters that might involve serious domestic disputes. And I think this affected to some extent the summit in Moscow in July. But it affected many other things in more intangible ways.

QUESTION: How do you rank the SALT agreement in Vladivostok in the list of achievements for this past year?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Very high, and of more permanent significance than perhaps anything else that was achieved. The various disengagement agreements in the Middle East were dramatic and important because they reversed a trend toward another outbreak of a war and may have set the stage for making some important progress. But I think in terms of permanent achievements, I would rank the outline for a second SALT agreement at or near the top. And I think it will be so viewed by history.

QUESTION: How do you account for all the criticism of SALT II?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think we have a difficult domestic situation right now. Many people remember, or think they remember, that foreign policy had certain domestic effects in '71 or '72. I don't agree with this. But I think it is in the back of some people's minds.

Secondly, there is a general atmosphere of disillusionment with government.

Thirdly, the liberal intellectual community, which used to lead American foreign policy, was alienated for a variety of reasons from the Johnson

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QUESTION: Our detente with China seems to have been stalled.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, this is the constant position of Newsweek magazine. But it is not our position. I believe that on the level of bilateral relations between the countries, we are essentially on course. I found that essentially confirmed by my last visit to the People's Republic of China. It is a relationship of practical necessity, in which two countries have made a decision to cooperate for limited objectives with each other. I don't accept the proposition that our policy is stalled.

QUESTION: Do you think within the next year we might move toward a normalization of relations with Cuba?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We were prepared to accept a two-thirds vote of the Organization of American States at its recent meeting in Quito, and we were led to believe that this two-thirds vote had been assured. Suddenly we found ourselves in the position of being asked to produce votes for a resolution which we could not possibly sponsor, given the history of our involvement in the sanctions. There will be another occasion next year in a less structured meeting in Buenos Aires to discuss the Cuban issue, where the necessity of producing votes is less intense, and where one can then chart a course on a hemisphere basis more effectively. I think there will be some evolution during the next year.

QUESTION: How do you evaluate your own situation now at the end of the year?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: During the period of President Nixon's crisis, I may have been over-protected from Congressional criticism because many of the senators and congressmen instinctively were fearful of doing damage to our foreign policy and believed that they had to preserve one area of our national policy from partisan controversy. So it was inevitable that after that restraint was removed I would rejoin the human race and be exposed to the normal criticisms of Secretaries of State.

I have spent a great deal of time with Congress in the last few weeks, and I have the impression that there is a solid relationship. We worked out the Greek-Turkish aid problem, I think, in a cooperative spirit. I really feel passionately that if we don't maintain our foreign policy on a bipartisan basis, we will be in the deepest trouble. Of course, fundamental issues ought to be discussed, including fundamental foreign policy issues. But there are various areas in which there is or ought to be substantial agreement. And as far as I am concerned, I am going to go the absolute limit of maintaining it on a bipartisan basis.

QUESTION: Do you think the pendulum has swung too far from one direction, from talk of "Super K", to an overwillingness now to criticize you?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: There is no magic and there are no supermen in foreign policy. The difference between a good and a mediocre foreign policy is the accumulation of nuances. It is meticulousness; it is careful preparation. If a Secretary of State or anybody concerned with foreign policy goes out to hit a home run every time he goes up there, he is putting a burden on himself and a strain on the system.

QUESTION: You have been quoted as saying that Americans like the lone cowboy, walking into town with his six-guns blazing.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think any society needs individuals that symbolize what it stands for. It is difficult to run countries without great figures.